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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 001922

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR (BRADKE), EUR/WE (MENNUITI)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2012

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SUBJECT: VATICAN: MONTHLY ACTIVITIES REPORT MARCH 2002

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON, REASON E.O. 12958 1.5 (B,D).

1. (C) THIS CABLE REPORTS ON EMBASSY VATICAN'S ACTIVITIES FOR MARCH 2002 (NOTE: THIS PERIOD COINCIDED WITH EASTER WEEK CELEBRATIONS AT THE VATICAN, WHICH EMBASSY STAFF ATTEND AS PART OF OUR REPRESENTATIONAL DUTIES.). IT IS INTENDED TO SUMMARIZE, BUT NOT EXHAUSTIVELY REPORT, OUR ACTIVITIES DURING THE MONTH. COVERED IN THIS CABLE ARE:

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-- AMBASSADOR IN USA
-- AMBASSADOR IN NAPLES
-- NATO-VATICAN DISCUSSION
-- DCM MEETINGS
-- POLITICAL SECTION MEETINGS
-- POPE'S HEALTH AT EASTER
-- TIP CONFERENCE
-- REPORTING: SANT'EGIDIO ON CUBA, MIDDLE EAST INTERESTS, ANDORRA/VATICAN RELATIONS, TIP CONFERENCE UPDATE.

2. (U) AMBASSADOR IN USA: AMBASSADOR TRAVELED TO THE USA MARCH 6-18 TO DELIVER SPEECHES AT THE WEST POINT BICENTENNIAL, THE JUNIPERO SERRA CLUB AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN DENVER, AND TO MEET WITH CARDINAL EGAN IN NEW YORK.

3. (U) AMBASSADOR NAPLES TRIP: AMBASSADOR TRAVELED TO NAPLES MARCH 20-21 TO CALL ON CARDINAL GIORDANO AND ATTEND THE USMA FOUNDERS DAY DINNER.

4. (C) AMBASSADOR FACILITATED A BRIEFING ON THE PRAGUE NATO SUMMIT FOR VATICAN DFM MIGLIORE BY NATO SPECIALISTS BRUCE JACKSON AND JULIE FINLEY. JACKSON EXHORTED A PUBLIC PAPAL ENDORSEMENT IN THE LEAD-UP TO PRAGUE.

5. (C) DCM MEETINGS:

-- ON MARCH 10 DCM MET WITH RUSSIAN DCM TO DISCUSS STATUS OF VATICAN RUSSIA RELATIONS. RUSSIAN SAID THAT RECENT VATICAN ACTIONS HAVE SET BACK RELATIONS 20-YEARS.

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-- ON MARCH 12, DCM FOLLOWED UP WITH MEETING WITH PASTOR OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ROME AND DE FACTO ORTHODOX REP TO THE VATICAN WHO SAID THAT DIALOG, ON A POLITICAL LEVEL, BETWEEN THE TWO CHURCHES IS AT A STANDSTILL.

-- EVENING OF MARCH 12 DCM ATTENDED A PRESENTATION ON "INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE TWO YEARS AFTER THE POPE'S PILGRIMAGE TO ISRAEL" HOSTED BY THE AMBASSADOR OF ISRAEL TO THE HOLY SEE. ALTHOUGH COMMENTATORS WERE UPBEAT, THE SENSE THAT ISRAEL/VATICAN RELATIONS ARE AT A LOW POINT BECAUSE OF THE CURRENT SITUATION WAS PREVALENT.

6. (C) POLITICAL SECTION MEETINGS:

-- POLOFFS MET 03/04 WITH SECRETARY OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, ARCHBISHOP ROBERT SARAH, A GUINEAN, TO DISCUSS OBSTACLES TO THE CHURCH'S EVANGELIZATION AND RELIEF/DEVELOPMENT WORK IN AFRICA. SARAH, JUST BACK FROM A VISIT TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, WAS WORRIED ABOUT KILLINGS OF CATHOLIC CLERGY IN THE DRC.

-- POLOFF MET 03/07 WITH PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AFRICA SPECIALIST DON DENIS CHIDI, A NIGERIAN. CHIDI WAS MUCH MORE POSITIVE ABOUT THE CHURCH'S FUTURE IN AFRICA THAN THE EUROPEAN VATICAN INTERLOCUTORS POST HAS DISCUSSED THIS WITH IN RECENT WEEKS. THE LATTER ARE QUICKER TO PERCEIVE A CHALLENGE FROM FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAM THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT.

-- POLOFF ATTENDED TRI-MISSION DVC 03/07 WITH U/S LARSON ON
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GLOBALIZATION/BIOTECH ISSUES IN LEAD-UP TO MONTERREY. POLOFF BROUGHT VATICAN OFFICIALS FRANK DEWANE (JUSTICE AND PEACE, AND NUMBER TWO IN HOLY SEE'S MONTERREY DELEGATION) AND DOMINIQUE MEMBERTI (FOREIGN MINISTRY DESK OFFICER).

-- POL/ADMINOFF AND POL ASSISTANT MET 03/12 WITH SECRETARY
ADJUNCT FOR THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF
PEOPLES, ARCHBISHOP RANJITH, TO DISCUSS THE CHURCH'S
MISSIONARY EFFORTS IN ASIA. BOTTOM LINE: VATICAN HAPPY TO
CO-EXIST PEACEFULLY ON THE CONTINENT WITH OTHER FAITHS. NO
DESIRE TO ROCK THE BOAT, THUS ENDANGERING THE LIVES OF
GROWING CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN THE REGION. DIALOGUE IS KEY.

-- POLOFF 03/13 ESCORTED STATE A/LM/IP GRANT SPECIALISTS ED
MUELLER AND JOANNA SNEARLY TO GRANTEE SANT'EGIDIO
HEADQUARTERS FOR FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION OF PD/ECA GRANTS FOR
CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROJECTS IN KOSOVO AND MOZAMBIQUE.

-- POLOFF MET 03/15 WITH VATICAN UN ISSUES DESKOFF CONVERSI
TO BROACH PROPOSAL FOR POSSIBLE JOINT BIOTECH-THEMED TRIP TO
INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00
	INL-00	DODE-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	VC-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	VCE-00	NSAE-00	OIC-02	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/004W		

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P 180503Z APR 02
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

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(POST'S IDEA TO HELP BRING ABOUT MORE POSITIVE PUBLIC VATICAN
POSITION ON GMO FOOD). CONVERSI WAS POSITIVE AND PROMISED TO
DISCUSS WITH HIS SUPERIORS. POLOFF TO FOLLOW UP AFTER EASTER
WEEK.

-- POLOFF ESCORTED 03/25 OSCE HOM ROBERT BEECROFT TO
COURTESY CALL WITH AMBASSADOR AND THEN TO MEETING WITH
VATICAN FM TAURAN. BEECROFT DETAILED TO TAURAN HIS
SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE HIGH LEVEL OF COMPLICITY OF CERTAIN
CROAT (HERZEGOVINIAN) CLERGY IN HERZEGOVANSKA BANKA
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MALFEASANCE AND CORRUPTION. TAURAN WAS RECEPTIVE, AND
APPEARED WILLING TO DO MORE TO PRESSURE BISHOP PERIC OF
MOSTAR AND THE MOSTAR FRANCISCANS TO DESIST FROM POLITICAL
SUPPORT FOR HARD-LINE HDZ NATIONALIST POSITIONS. (NOTE:
BEECROFT'S ASSISTANT TOLD POLOFF THE NEXT MORNING THAT A
03/26 MEETING WITH THE HEAD OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER HAD GONE
WELL; THE FRANCISCANS SAID THEY HAD REPLACED THE SUPERIOR
GENERAL OF THE BOSNIAN FRANCISCANS WITH A CROAT-AMERICAN, WHO
PRESUMABLY WOULD BE LESS TOLERANT OF FRANCISCAN SHENANIGANS
IN BOSNIA).

-- POL/ADMINOFF MET VATICAN CHINA DESK OFFICER MSGR.
ROTA-GRAZIOZI TO DISCUSS 3/19 VATICAN VISIT OF TAIWAN VICE
PRESIDENT ANNETTE HSIU-LIEN LU. DUE TO THE VATICAN'S OFFICIAL
CLOSURE 3/19 FOR ST. JOSEPH'S DAY, VATICAN FM TAURAN RECEIVED
LU IN HIS PRIVATE QUARTERS. ROTA-GRAZIOZI STATED THE MEETING
WAS WITHOUT SUBSTANCE, A PROTOCOL STOP IN AN ITINERARY THAT
INCLUDED THE VATICAN MUSEUMS AND ST. PETER'S BASILICA.

17. (C) EASTER CEREMONIES: AMBASSADOR AND EMBASSY OFFICERS
ATTENDED THE WEEKLONG SERIES OF OFFICIAL VATICAN EASTER
CEREMONIES, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF SIGNIFICANT TIME IN THE
PRESENCE OF THE POPE TO ASSESS HIS PHYSICAL WELLBEING. HE
SEEMS TO BE OK. (SEE REFTTEL)

18. (U) TIP CONFERENCE: DURING MARCH EMBASSY MADE PROGRESS IN
ORGANIZING THE MAY 15-16 CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN RIGHT
DIMENSION OF TIP. WE LOCKED IN SEVERAL KEY SPEAKERS,
INCLUDING CARDINAL SODANO AND STABILITY PACT TTIP TASK FORCE
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CHAIR HELGA KONRAD. SPANISH AMBASSADOR TO HOLY SEE HELPED
LOCK-IN PARTICIPATION BY PONTIFICAL COUNCILS FOR JUSTICE AND
PEACE AND MIGRANTS. VARIOUS OTHER EMBASSIES ACCREDITED TO
HOLY SEE FORWARDED SPEAKER SUGGESTIONS.

19. (C) REPORTING: VATICAN 1152: SANT'EGIDIO THANKS UNCLE SAM
AND CHIDES "HYPOCRITE" FIDEL; VATICAN 1171: VATICAN'S "OTHER"

INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST; VATICAN 1176: ANDORRA TO OPEN
EMBASSY TO VATICAN; VATICAN 1483: UPDATE ON TIP CONFERENCE.
NICHOLSON

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